



John Bolding was born into slavery on a plantation near Columbia, South Carolina. Bolding worked for his owner, Townsend Dickinson. When Dickinson's health failed, he sold Bolding to two other men, from whom Bolding escape around 1840. He fled north, accompanied by his younger brother David and an enslaved woman named Susan. Susan married an African-American Poughkeepsie tailor named Francis Moore.

The Moores, John Bolding and David Bolding were listed in the 1850 census as living at the same address, 20 Academy Street in Poughkeepsie. There was a Moore/Bolding tailor shop located at 4 Liberty Street.

In 1851, after passage of the harsh new Fugitive Slave Act, a white visitor from South Carolina recognized Bolding in Poughkeepsie and alerted his former master. In August 1851, Bolding was seized at his shop by U.S. Marshalls, taken to New York City, tried in a special federal court (rights of *habeus corpus* had been suspended for these types of cases, on the presumption that those captured were in fact slaves, and therefore had no such rights). Bolding

was sent back to slavery in South Carolina. His case became a national sensation – one of the more famous of these types of cases.

Citizens of Poughkeepsie, led by local abolitionists, raised funds to pay for Bolding's freedom. His owner agreed to accept \$1,750 in payment, but then demanded an additional \$250 for transportation expenses. Though it was doubtful that this sum could be raised, local abolitionists succeeded in doing so by November. Bolding returned to Poughkeepsie and lived there with his wife, Henrietta, until his death. In the post-Civil War years, they lived at 14 Pine Street.

He is buried in the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery.